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Home Warriors

A Playlet To Promote Soldiers' Play

Mrs. Minnie Clarke Budlong
and
Charlotte Matson
Public Library Commission
Bismarck, North Dakota



For Presentation in Schools and Communities
With Special Reference to the
United War Work Campaign

October, 1918

CHARACTERS

John Hooper	The Father
Mary Hooper	The Mother
Agnes	Young Lady Daughter
Jack	About 14
Billy	12

The first scene is sufficient for one item in an evening program. It can be extended to form the entire entertainment by using Scene 2.

SCENE 1.

The interior of a modern farm home, with a piano, or victrola, and a table. On the wall is a framed picture of a soldier, with the flags of the United States and the Allies draped above it. There is a service flag in the window, also the insignia of the Red Cross, Liberty Loan, etc. When the curtain goes up the mother sits at the table knitting—the daughter holds a hat in her hand, looking at it dubiously. The larger boy is sprawled out on the floor, absorbed in a book—the other boy is doing some figuring at the table, with much scowling and rumpling of hair.

SCENE 2.

Stage of a school house or small hall. Rehearsal for entertainment to be given for U. W. W. C. The characters in Scene 1, with as many others as are desired, take part.

Recitations by characters dressed to represent each of the seven organizations.

Patriotic songs, in some of which the audience joins.

Living posters. (The A. L. A. posters are easily adapted to presentation: i. e. the soldier sitting at ease reading, the soldier collecting a pile of books, etc.)

Victrola selections.

In place of character recitations brief addresses may be given for each organization by its county chairman or district director.

The United War Work Campaign (U. W. W. C.) is being conducted by the

National War Council of the Y. M. C. A.

War Work Council of the Y. W. C. A.

National Catholic War Council. (K. of C.)

Jewish Welfare Board.

War Camp Community Service (W. C. C. S.)

American Library Association (A. L. A.)

Salvation Army.

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Home Warriors

Agnes. Hoover himself couldn't do anything with this hat. Seems to me after three winters for one five dollar hat I really am entitled to a new one. Don't you think so?

Mother. Yes, if you can't make it do again.

Agnes. Well, I might, of course, but the crown's too low for this season and I'm tired to death of the old thing. I know its supposed to be fashionable to go shabby this year, but I notice all the girls are getting new winter hats just the same.

Mother. Yes, you have done your duty by that old hat, and do need a new one I suppose. Thank goodness, I'm not so stylish that I can't wear my old clothes again. What is it Billy?

Billy, (Has been muttering to himself and struggling with some figures). Say, if I get four and a quarter a week from my paper route and I pay a dollar a week for my share of our Liberty Bonds and fifty cents for thrift stamps and a dollar and a quarter on my new bike, how much am I going to have to run on? One and one-fifty and one and a quarter and—

Jack. (Answers without looking up from his paper). Dollar an' a half.

Mother. But what's this about a bicycle? You boys have a bicycle already.

Billy. Half a one—that's no fun. Jack always wants it when I do, and Ted Jones will sell me his for fifteen dollars, by the week. It's a peach—most new—with a coaster brake and a Klaxon and everything.

Mother. But you really don't need it, and anyway I don't want you to get anything like that without asking your father, especially these hard times.

Billy. (Jumps up). Here's dad now.

(Enter father, with a big bundle, his hands full of mail which Billy distributes while his father takes off his coat, assisted by Agnes.)

Father. Hello, everybody. Fine night, but we're going to have a hard frost. I emptied the radiator—don't want the old machine freezing up this time of the year.

Billy. Here's your Boy's Monthly, Jack. I'll leave you the papers, dad. What's in the big bundle? Anything for me?

Father. Yarn for Mother. They want sweaters now, and Mrs. Thompson says that their quota of socks has been increased to 500 pairs a month and I told her I guess my wife'd have to sit up nights if she knits any more than she does now. She sent Agnes three of those shirts that are to be split up the back, or up the front or whatever they aren't now. Directions are with them.

Agnes. Any letters, Daddy?

Billy. Two for you. One says Y.M.C.A. on it—bet I.

know who that's from. The other looks like Cousin Ruth's sloppy writing. Wonder what she's got to say. Here, catch. (Tosses them to Agnes, who opens them eagerly).

Mother. None from Jimmie?

Billy. N-no. Yes there is, too. It's for Jack, tho.

(Jack rises, opens his letter in great excitement, and the family stops all operations and listens while he reads it.)

Jack. Reads, "Dear Jack. It's your turn for a letter this time. There's not much to tell you. We are still where we were the last time I wrote when I told mother all about it and the place and the people. Tell her that little Jean can sing a whole verse of the Star-Spangled Banner now. Wish I could learn French as fast as these kids learn to talk English. We aren't allowed to tell much. We haven't been as busy as usual and have so much time on our hands. I tell you Jack, you're lucky to have all the books you want. How would you like to be stranded where there's almost nothing to read? We read what we have to shreds and then there's never enough. I wish I had a chance at our old town library again, or even the books at home. Here it's a scramble to get even part of a book. Did you ever read Scottish Chiefs? I never did until I got hold of it here, and then if some boob hadn't lost the end and I haven't been able to find out yet what was in that casket. Suppose I never will until we lick the Kaiser and come home. It's not only story books we want either. They've started classes to study for promotion and I'm studying harder than I ever did at school and we need a lot of math books—wish I had some of the old ones I packed away after I got through with them. Your're such an old book-worm, kid, that I know you'll appreciate how it is. I never had time to read books when I was in college."

Bernt has been in the hospital—had the mumps—fine heroic thing to have—not! He told me he nearly had a fit one day. They gave him scrap books to read, full of pictures and funny stories and if one of them didn't have a picture of his home town with his old gang standing in front of his dad's store. He was so tickled he almost forgot that he was sick.

I've got some souvenirs to send you and Billy the first time I get a chance—a German helmet and belt I got from a Fritz prisoner for a package of cigarettes and some chocolate. Tell Sis I'll write her next. And tell mother I've gained five pounds more and feel like a fighting cock. Love to all. Jimmie."

(No one speaks for a moment. Their eyes wander to the picture of the soldier.)

Jack. (Draws a long breath). Gee—no books. Why, I'd die.

Billy. Poor old Jimmie.

Agnes. They all tell the same story. That's just what Charles says in the letter too. His ship was stationed for several weeks at some little island in the Aegean Sea, and he says his men got so desperate for something new to read that they nearly went crazy—even saved and read the labels on tomato cans because they had English words on them.

Billy. Well, folks, that's easy. Why can't we just pack up

some books and send them over to Jimmie—Charles, too. I'm sure we've got lots we can spare. Let's do that.

Agnes. How, I'd like to know! You can't even send a box of fudge and when Jim wanted new razor blades he had to get an order from his Major.

Billy. Mean old things.

Agnes. Goodness, Billy, if everyone sent whatever they wanted to there wouldn't be any room for the other things they need—food and clothes and guns for the soldiers, or even room for the soldiers themselves.

Father. (Looks up from his paper). Great Scott! Here we just got through with Liberty Bonds and now there is another drive. What's this about a United War Work Campaign of seven big organizations? You know anything about it, mother?

Mother. No-o---I don't believe---tho come to think of it I did hear them talking about something like that yesterday at surgical dressing.

Jack. Oh, I know, Dad . I've been reading about it. They are all the things that help to make the soldiers comfortable and do the things for them that the Government hasn't time to do—the Y. M. C. A. and the Y. W. and the Knights of Columbus.

Billy. Oh, yes, I know—the Salvation Army and the Jews and the War-War

Jack. War Camp Community Service and the A. L. A. I don't know what that is, tho.

Agnes. Well, I do. Ruth's a librarian and she is in a camp library and that's the American Library Association.

Billy. Well if there is a camp librarian why can't they furnish books to Jim and Charlie and all the rest of the fellows? That's their job, isn't it?

Father. That's just what they do—so the paper says. Listen (Reads) "The Government has set aside in its ships for the A. L. A. 50 tons of storage space a month to be used in sending books to the soldiers. The A. L. A. is now asking for \$3,500,000 to purchase books."

Mother. Why, they don't need to buy books. Don't you remember we gave all our old ones last spring and the papers said 10,000 were sent from this state alone?

Jack. But what's 10,000 books when we have already sent 25,000 soldiers?

Mother. Three and a half millions would buy more books than any one could ever read.

Jack. It wouldn't be a book apiece for our three million soldiers.

Agnes. There's lots to be done besides just buying books. I visited Ruth's library when I was in the city and it takes people and supplies and time.

Billy. What for? Don't they just buy the books and shoot them over?

Agnes. They have to choose the books and order them and unpack them when they come from the publisher and make cards for them and put in pockets and pack them again to ship across the sea . And it takes cases to put them in, and that all costs money, and they have to have central build-

ings to keep them in while they are getting them ready to send out to the rest houses and hospitals and huts.

Father. Seems to be a lot to it, then, besides just the books. And the three and a half million the A. L. A. want for books is only a drop in the bucket. A hundred and seventy and a half millions is wanted for the whole United War Work Campaign, as they call it. The Y. M. C. A. wants 100 millions and Y. W. 15 millions.

Jack. Well, they do the biggest work. Why, don't you know the things Jimmie has said about the Y., that it was the greatest thing ever happened—when he was in camp and after he got across. He writes all his letters there—and I guess there are mighty few folks now-a-days that don't get letters with that little red triangle in the corner. Those little huts are everywhere. You remember, Bill, that news movie we went to last week. There was a Y. M. C. A. dugout right in the trenches and they say the men go everywhere, and carry cigarettes and things to soldiers and even go right where they are fighting. Wasn't it a Y. man who carried Phil Dunlap in when he was wounded and saved his life? I guess nobody begrudges the Y. M. C. A. anything, or the Y. W., either.

Billy. Y. W. Young Women—what's that got to do with war, I'd like to know. A lot of women messing around an army—fine idea!

Mother. I can tell you about the Y. W. C. A. What do you suppose I would have done when I went down to camp to see Jimmie last winter when he had pneumonia? The Hostess House was just like home—they just took care of me. I think I should have died without it. I was so homesick and worried.

Agnes. Curtis and Jean were married in a hostess house, too.

Mother, Well, I should say so! There were five weddings there one afternoon—the hostess even got the minister for them, and I was witness for two of them. And there was a baby christened there one day—cute, fat, little fellow—looked just like Billy did when he was a baby. The father was a big boy not any older than our Jimmie—crazy about the baby, too—he had never seen it. The poor little mother was only a girl. I saw her when she got there, she was tired out and just about scared to death—had spent all her money and the baby was crying and she didn't know how to find her husband. She just followed some folks to the Hostess House by chance and she told me that her troubles just dropped away—it was like heaven to her. And you should see the way those boys flocked in, just to talk to the hostess woman. She said she thought one boy cut his buttons off to get an excuse to have her sew them on again. It's no mistake to give the Y. W. C. A. money—those women won't waste it.

Jack. Then there's the Knights of Columbus—that's the Catholic society, you know.

Billy. Why can't the Catholics write letters and do all those things in the Y. M. C. A. houses and smoke anybody's

cigarettes? It seems foolish to have Catholic and Y. M. huts separate. If I was a soldier—

Jack. Quit your knocking. If you were a soldier—a nice little Methodist soldier like you'd be—how'd you like to go to church in a Catholic hut and not have any minister or any place of your own? There's more to it than cigarettes and a place to write letters and loaf. I guess the boys have a right to their own religion. If Pat Flynn wants to go to Mass, it's up to the rest of us to see that he has a place to go to Mass in. And the Jews—they want three and a half million, too, and I think they deserve it. If that little Ikey Schwartz who keeps the junk store on Main Street was brave enough to go and fight for us, I say he should have a church of his own as well as any of the other boys.

Father. Right you are! But what I don't see is what the Salvation Army has got to do with it. They want three and a half million, too. What for? To parade the street with a band collecting a crowd of bums? They can all go to some of the others huts, can't they?

Jack. Have you forgotten that story the lecturer told last winter? How arrangements had been made to take care of the soldiers at one of the camps by their own denominations and they asked the Presbyterians all to come one way and the Methodists and the Baptists and so forth, all the churches, the Catholics and the Jews and everyone, and then the Salvation Army men said "I'll take what is left for my share," and more than half of them were left! Then the officer said "But we have no accommodations in camp for the Salvation Army" and the leader said "I'll take care of them outside of camp, then." That's the kind they are!

Agnes. And don't you remember that letter Jimmie wrote after he had been in the trenches the first time? He said there was a Salvation Army lassie there frying doughnuts in a dug-out and it smelled like home and she looked like an angel. All the fellows think the Salvation Army is the real stuff.

Billy. I vote for them, too. What's the next.

Jack. War Camp Community Service. They want fifteen millions. That's what furnishes the fun—shows and movies and prize fights and all the rest. Those fellows have to play sometimes and that bosses the play and gives them something to play with. They even send fine actors over to France to give entertainments for them.

Agnes. Yes, I saw in the Red Cross magazine that Elsie Janis has been over there since Spring acting for the boys.

Mother. Remember, Father? We saw her the last time we were in Chicago. My, how you did laugh! I hope Jimmie gets a chance to see her.

Father. You bet I remember Elsie. If they are sending her over to amuse the boys, it's sure all right. You know the old saying about all work and no play makes—

Billy. Makes Sammie a dull boy. Of course we want the soldiers to play. It's up to us to see that Jimmie is amused, anyway.

Mother. Is that all?

Agnes. Except what's in Ruth's letter about the A. L. A.

She's at Camp Loomis now, and listen to what she says
(Reads) "This is the most interesting and busiest place I ever imagined. We have hundreds of men in here a day and they want everything from joke books to the most scientific text books. Why in one day we had calls for books on psychology, refrigeration, a love story with a happy ending, even Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch. The old sergeant that took that out thought it was a book on gardening, but said it was a mighty good book and he enjoyed it anyway. Some fellows read two books every day, and I'm sure a lot of boys who never read a book through before they came to camp, are getting to be regular patrons of ours. They say the soldiers in France are more eager for books than the ones here. It's going to take a lot of money to furnish something for all our millions of soldiers to read, but if it's going to make them happier and more comfortable of course we're going to give it."

Father. How much will you give, boy?

Billy. Who? Me? Well, I'm about busted. If I get my—Gee I suppose I don't have to have a bike—not until the war's over, anyway. I'll give that fifteen dollars I was planning to invest in that—a dollar and a quarter a week—then my share that goes to Jimmie will be enough to buy him a book for Christmas, anyway.

Jack. I've got ten dollars left since we bought our bond. That can go, but I can't let Bill beat me. I've got to give something up—but I don't know what unless—yes, I'll give up my magazines—I can do that much for Jimmie. I'll give up the Boys' Monthly and my Weekly.

Agnes. Oh, not the Weekly, Jack. Why, we've had that ever since Jim was a baby.

Father. I should say so—longer than that. I started that when I was six. I don't think we could get along without that, either.

Billy. Sure we could—for Jimmie and the rest of our soldiers. 'Course it will be hard. But Gee—isn't this war? Anyway we can borrow Ted Jones' or get it from the library—what's a library for?

Jack. Yes we can. But that will be a real sacrifice for all of us, won't it, Mother?

Mother. Yes it will, Son. I'm going to give that new washing machine Dad promised me. The old one's in pretty bad shape but if you boys will help with the washing—

Billy. You bet we will, Mother. And every time I turn the crank I'll think "Here's another page for Jimmie."

Agnes. Well I see my nice black velour sailor hat going up in smoke. I'll join the shabby club and make my old hat do another winter.

Father. And I will chip in as much as the rest of you give. I guess we can't do too much for our boys, can we folks?

Billy. No sir! You know that poster that says "They gave their lives—what did you give?" Well, that's right. We've got to give or we'll be ashamed to look Jimmie in the face after he comes back from Berlin, or let Agnes marry Charles

after he gets out of the navy. War Savings Stamps and Liberty Bonds are nothing. Jack and I will get all that money back when we are men—more than we put in it, too. All we can do to help them is to give money to make them comfortable, and if it is books and all the rest of these things they want it's up to the Hooper family to dig right in and get 'em books. No slackers in this house, you can just bet!

Agnes. All we can give won't buy books for many soldiers. How can we get more people interested in it so they will help?

Mother. Talk about it at Red Cross and Aid Society and—

Agnes. Oh I know. We'll give an entertainment to have this all explained and to help raise money for the United War Work Campaign.

Mother. That will be fine. But now it's past bedtime for the boys and we must have our sing and send them off to sleep with some patriotic music to mix with their dreams.

(Agnes goes to piano and plays accompaniments or puts on Victrola records while all sing patriotic songs, ending with "U. S. A. Forever.")

Billy. This is the way the boys will be singing it after they hear about the three and a half million dollars worth of books that are coming. (Sings)

It's the A. L. A. forever,

Hooray! Hooray!

I thank the band in the dear homeland

That sends us boys the reading;

Hooray! I say,

The A. L. A. forever.

CURTAIN.

RECITATION FOR BOY REPRESENTING AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION.

Why do soldiers want books? I thought they needed guns and sweaters and sugar and white flour. Tom did not read books when he was home. He has gone "over there" to fight and it must have changed him a lot for now he writes us to send him reading and "hurry up about it." Of course he can't go autoing, now, evenings, and there isn't any dance to go to, and he hasn't any girl to visit and maybe he does want something to do when his rest hour comes. He wrote he wanted an algebra and a trigonometry and some travel and a love story and joke books. Why! When he came from college he threw those books in the farthest corner of the attic and said he never wanted to see them again; and now he writes he needs them to study for his next examination. You see he wants to be an officer and they need to know a lot about mathematics. So do aviators. That's why Willie's brother wrote for some. And when it's been raining all day and they are cold and muddy and wet they want a good story or a funny joke to brace them up. We can't send books any more ourselves because the Government won't take parcels for soldiers, but it has given the American Library Association tonnage space for 50 tons of books a month and they buy books and get them ready and send them over and put them in Y. M. C. A. and K. of C. huts and Recreation Centers and Salvation Army barracks and anywhere else in camps and trenches that they will be handy for the boys. When a ship arrives there is a great rush to get the boxes of new books.

Every soldier who sails from the U. S. is allowed to put one book in his pack, and they change books on ship board and read each others' and when they land on the other side they leave their book and take a new one. Tom wrote he had read 25 books since he left home. It takes a lot of books when we have millions of soldiers. The American Library Association is asking for 3 1-2 million dollars to buy books and get them over to our boys. That is less than a dollar apiece, not one book to a soldier. I tell you what I'm going to do—I'm going to earn a dollar and give it to the A. L. A. to buy a book that Tom will like. I'll call it my Christmas present to him, and it will make him happy and lots of other boys' brothers who will read it, too. Won't you give something to buy books that will make our boys forget their troubles when they have a chance to read?

You can give more than I can because you earn more and perhaps you have two or three brothers or sons over there and you will want them to have a book apiece so they can stretch out and read at ease, and not have to crowd up in a bunch to listen to one fellow read aloud the way they do now. They even cut books up now to make them go around and give one chapter to each fellow and sometimes you can't get the next chapter anywhere. So let's hurry up and see that every man has a book to himself by Christmas.

MRS. M. C. BUDLONG,
State Director, A. L. A.
U. W. W. C.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



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